

"A FIT SOULE": ITALIAN INFLUENCES UPON MILTON'S EVE

A Senior Honors Thesis

By

MATTIE KATHERINE PENNEBAKER

Submitted to the Office of Honors Programs
& Academic Scholarships
Texas A&M University
In partial fulfillment of the requirements of the

UNIVERSITY UNDERGRADUATE
RESEARCH FELLOWS

April 2000

Group: Humanities

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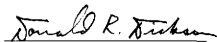
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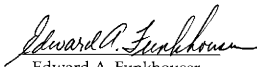
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Texas A&M University
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For the Designation of

UNIVERSITY UNDERGRADUATE
RESEARCH FELLOW

Approved as to style and content by:



Donald R. Dickson
(Fellows Advisor)



Edward A. Funkhouser
(Executive Director)

April 2000

Group: Humanities

ABSTRACT

"A fit soule": Italian Influences Upon Milton's Eve. (April 2000)

Mattie Katherine Pennebaker
Department of English
Texas A&M University

Fellows Advisor: Dr. Donald R. Dickson
Department of English

Seventeenth-century England proved to be a dynamic atmosphere for John Milton's development as a poet. The Scientific Revolution, the rise of the middle class and the increasing conflict between country and crown culminated in extreme socio-political tension. This volatile environment led to the English Civil War and set the stage for revolutionary thought about woman's status in European society.

The objective of this research project is to investigate not only misogynistic portrayals of women in art, but also positive portrayals of women and their influence on the artist John Milton and his stalwart character Eve, in *Paradise Lost*, during his continental tour in 1638-1639. I shall argue that Milton consciously fashioned an Eve who exercises free will with balanced qualities of strength and vulnerability in her persona. Prelapsarian Eve masterly proves her skills in poetic verse and exhibits responsibility and logic, not only as an autonomous being but also as Adam's worthy helpmate. In reading the epic poem, one can see that Milton's Eve is neither weak nor sinister, as are so many of the depictions of her in Renaissance etchings and frescos.

Interestingly, a female Baroque painter, Artemisia Gentileschi, Milton's contemporary, proves an exceptional influence on the poet for she too paints a new conception of woman as independent and powerful. Like Milton, she works against the reductive painterly and literary role historically prescribed to woman and thus Eve. Establishing a relationship between these two artists, as well as other artists of the period, will prove quite significant in forwarding a body of scholarship for their contemporaries, further establishing the influence and intermingling of art and literature between iconoclastic, Protestant England, and Catholic Italy and, finally, in aiding studies of the debate over woman's role in seventeenth-century society.

This thesis is dedicated to my mother, Elizabeth, and my fiancé, Erik, with gratitude, admiration, and love.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My greatest gratitude goes to Dr. Donald R. Dickson, whose constructive advice on editorial matters, and on suggestions for reading on specific themes, was invaluable.

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CHAPTER I

Seventeenth-century Europe proved to be a dynamic atmosphere for John Milton's development as a poet. The evolution towards modernity initiated in the Renaissance progressed steadily because of the Scientific Revolution. This new mode of thought encouraged intellectuals to evaluate their world systematically and objectively utilizing the skills of experimentation, observation, and the scientific method. The radical transformation of mankind's conception of the physical universe ultimately altered understanding of the individual, society, and the purpose of life. Indeed, the Scientific Revolution is considered a decisive period for understanding the growth and development of the modern world. Copernican astronomy refuted the primitive notion of a narrow universe, suggesting that human beings are participants of something much greater than what was previously thought—an infinite universe. Likewise, Galileo Galilei's discovery that celestial bodies are not perfect and unchangeable, as well as his sighting of the four moons that orbit Jupiter (a challenge to the Copernican system of the universe) overtuned previous medieval theories of the world. Johannes Kepler and Tycho Brahe's studies on planetary motion also contested basic theories established by Aristotle and Ptolemy.

Outside of the realm of astronomy, two enlightened thinkers were prominent in voicing the importance and usefulness of scientific observation. Sir Francis Bacon, an Englishman and philosopher, strongly encouraged the progression of scientific inquiry. He advocated the use of the inductive method,

based on observation of the world, collection of results, and establishment of general laws subjected to continual experimentation. This form of investigation led to such advances as William Harvey's discovery of the circulation of blood (Perry 285). René Descartes, a French mathematician and philosopher, is known for generating a new empirical methodology based on mathematics. His work, *Discourse on Method* (1637), challenges methods of learning in his day and suggests new techniques for questioning the order of the universe and the meaning of man's existence.

The Scientific Revolution fostered a rational and critical spirit among intellectual circles. If archaic concepts of man's physical world could be challenged, could not political beliefs as well—for example, the divine right of kings to rule, or woman's status in a largely repressive society? With the achievements of science as precursor, many intellectuals encouraged application of this new scientific inquiry to all branches of knowledge. The poet John Milton, born into "the century of genius," would apply skills derived from scientific inquiry in order to comment politically and socially on England's affairs. This mode of challenging established political ideology is apparent in such works as his *The Reason of Church-Government*, *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*, *Areopagitica*, and *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*.

Aside from the initiation of new modes of scientific questioning, England and the European continent provided politically colorful and violent times which encouraged religious, social, and political debate. The English Civil War,

Spanish Inquisition, Counter-Reformation, and the Thirty Years War (among many other riveting events) shaped the European consciousness and encouraged debate and discussion as new ways of thinking emerged and challenged one another. For the English traveler this volatile world was quite apparent, especially for one such as Milton who comments extensively about politics, religion and society comparing the English world to ancient Greece or baroque Rome.

One way intellectual historians trace the development and debate of movements of thought is by studying the “climate of opinion” prevalent socially and culturally during the period under scrutiny. According to historian W. Warren Wagar, the term climate of opinion “describes the temper of thought, the spirit of the age, the presuppositions from which formal movements of ideas take rise” (3). Roland N. Stromberg concurs, offering the notion that “ideas evolve dialectically and progressively as one thinker takes up and modifies the thoughts of his predecessor” (563). A scholar like Milton who actively participates and contributes to social debates of his time “cannot ignore the body of ideas bequeathed as a starting point by previous generations, which constitute the materials of his thought” (563). New concepts and ideas do not sprout spontaneously, but rather build upon one another from generation to generation.

Analyzing Milton within this historical construct reveals that he utilized previous conceptions of the female, both misogynistic and proto-feminist, as well as current ideas in order to shape and define his “fit [female] soule” for the

ultimate English epic, *Paradise Lost*. If, as Diane K. McColley asserts in her critical study *Milton's Eve*, Milton was working against the “reductive critical” literary and iconographic tradition of Eve, perhaps he encountered pro-feminist literature and iconography to help mold his New Eve, and in a sense, a new conception of woman for the seventeenth century. If this is the case, I propose that Milton's Eve in *Paradise Lost* was influenced by the heroic women of Renaissance and baroque art, subsequent to encountering these works during his continental tour to Italy in the latter 1630s.

While McColley addresses the subject of misogynistic iconography, she does not entertain the possible influence of proto-feminist artwork upon Milton's depiction of Eve. I propose to examine in greater depth: 1) Milton's continental tour, 2) Baroque art under Urban VIII, 3) proto-feminist literature and iconography, 4) and the text of *Paradise Lost* so that the literary and iconographic journey in search of a new Eve may be illumined in its historical context, while also revealing much about the tantalizing interplay of art, literature, and politics in one particular period of European history.

Chapter II

Acquiring his passport in late April 1638, the English poet John Milton was ready to begin a voyage that would transform his knowledge of the construct of the universe, tempt his palate with incredible Mediterranean cuisine, and tease his eye with the wonders of Italian artistry. Milton was traveling the continent in a quest to discover his poetic persona and the ultimate English epic. In fact, he once commented that he wanted to visit Italy primarily because “it is the home of humane studies and of all civilized teachings” (CM, VIII,114,120). Milton explains in *A Second Defense*, “I desired to see foreign countries and especially Italy” (CM, VIII,114,120). Indeed, it was in Italy where Milton spent a majority of his time battling wits at academies and composing ballads for an Italian diva. The poet established a cadre of acquaintances and comrades in every Italian city into which he ventured; and it appears that Florence, Rome, and Naples provided for Milton the companionship as well as the inspiration not only for his future epic, but for the heroic female whom he would cast as Eve.

Florence, 1638-1639

Florence, birthplace of Dante and prison to Galileo, is an enchanting city for the aspiring poet today. Where else can one find one’s muse while admiring Brunelleschi’s Duomo, gazing into the Arno from the Ponte Vecchio, or lunching among the towering statues of Piazza Signoria. Milton loved Florence with an unbridled passion that is evidenced by the relationships he established and maintained with certain Florentines. In *A Second Defense* Milton praises Florence:

In that city, which I have always cherished more than the others for its elegance of speech and manners, I stayed about two months.

There I quickly contracted intimacy with many truly noble and learned men. I also assiduously attended their private academies, an institution which is most highly to be praised there, not only for preserving the arts but also for cementing friendships. Time shall never efface the memory, forever grateful and pleasing to me, of you, James Gaddi, Charles Dati, Frescobaldi, Cultellino, Bonmatthei, Clementillo, Francini, and numerous others. (CM, VIII, 122)

These eminent men of the Florentine academies welcomed Milton into their world of pageants and literary patronage, introducing him to some of the most prominent and influential characters of Renaissance Italy. Indeed, the Accademia degli Svogliati and the Accademia degli Apatisti provided a venue where Milton could play with the Tuscan tongue while also establishing invaluable connections.

Founded by the illustrious Signore Jacopo Gaddi, the Accademia degli Svogliati or “Academy of the Willless,” provided a nexus for Milton’s exposure to the intellectual elite of Florence. Evidence of Milton’s participation in this society is present in the academy’s minutes of 16 September 1638, and the 17 and 24 March 1639 (French 389, 408). According to Estelle Haan, there is evidence that Milton had arrived in Florence and attended academic sessions as early as 28

June. She points out, "The register of the Svogliati on that day records the presence of 'an English man of letters who wanted to enter the academy'" (Haan 13). Further evidence in Milton's private correspondence attests to his presence at these literary meetings. In a letter to his intimate, Charles Dati, Milton sends salutations to "Coltellini, Francini, Frescobaldi, Malatesta, Clementillo the younger, anyone else you know that remembers me with some affection, and in fine, to the whole Gaddian Academy. Again farewell! London: April 21, 1647" (CM,VIII, 53).

The Svogliati meeting places were scattered throughout Florence in such locales as the Paradiso Gaddi, the gardens on the Via Melarancio, the palace on the Piazza Madonna, and at the Villa Camerata near Fiesole. Milton's visits would take him through the architectural and statuary wonders of the city. Among these locations Gaddi dispersed his enormous collection of manuscripts and art. "The dwellings and the open galleries facing upon the gardens included many remarkable pieces of modern and ancient sculpture" (Arthos 20). Also exposed to the eyes of Milton "were marvelous collections of jewels and medals, antiquities from Egypt, and paintings of Leonardo, del Sarto, and others of the greatest Italians" (Arthos 20). The environs of the Svogliati were delightful to the eye of any Florentine, never mind that of an Englishman from an iconoclastic country who had been newly introduced to the aesthetic wonders of the south.

Haan suggests that many of the men mentioned in Milton's correspondence with Dati were members of other academies that the poet might

have visited as well. In his work *The Reason of Church Government* Milton states, "But much latelier in the privat Academies of *Italy*, whither I was favor'd to resort, perceiving that some trifles which I had in memory, compos'd at under twenty or thereabout ..." (CM, III, 235,236). This passage suggests that Milton attended numerous academies and submitted many of his works to different groups. Haan provides illuminating information regarding Milton's participation in the Accademia degli Apatisti, founded by Agostino Coltellini. On a manuscript of recorded members from 1638 is the name "Giovanni Milton inglese," which unquestionable establishes his participation in the Apatisti. It would seem logical, as well, that Milton would visit the same academies that his close Florentine friends frequented. The man of letters Benedetto Bonmathei, the world renowned astronomer Gaileo Galilei, Milton's young friend Carlo Dati, as well as the famous Florentine nephew of Michelangelo, Michelangelo the Younger, all participated in the Accademia della Crusca, founded in 1582 (Cochrane 1). One of Milton's biographers states,

So remarkable was he [Milton] for his Knowledge in the *Italian* Tongue that the *Crusca* (an Academy Set up for the Reducing, and keeping the *Florentine* language to its First Purity) made no Scruple to Consult Him, Whom they had receiv'd an Academician, on Difficult and Controverted Points. (French 374)

Older than the Accademia della Crusca by about forty years, the Accademia Fiorentina, founded by the first Medici duke in 1540, is another

academy Milton attended, as recorded in the academy's minutes of 31 March 1639 (French 414).

Although the estimated twenty academies in Florence maintained different goals and worked arduously not to be absorbed into other societies, they relied on one another for a mutual clientele. Thus, the elite men of Florence mingled in the same circles, establishing an intimate environment and exposing one another to all the liberal arts. This coterie of intellectuals gave Milton access to Florentine art patrons like Michelangelo Buonarroti the Younger, language scholars like Benedetto Bonmattei, and a world famous astronomer Galileo Galilei.

Milton's relations with academy members progressed far beyond mere acquaintance. His friendship with the young Florentine Carlo Dati shows that the poet forged intimate bonds there. The eighteen year-old Dati was a member of the Svogliati, Apatisti, and Crusca academies. He is known for many works of poetry and essays including *Lives of the Painters*. It is the written exchange between Milton and Dati that the depth of their admiration for one another becomes apparent. In a letter to Dati, after Milton's return to England, the English poet states,

from the time of my departure from Florence you have been
anxious about my health and always mindful of me, I truly
congratulate myself that a feeling has been equal and mutual in

both of us, the existence of which on my side only I was perhaps claiming to my credit. (CM, XII,47,49)

The affectionate tone of this passage reveals the depth of Milton's friendship with Dati. In this same missive he remarks that he has "the most pleasant memory of all of you [all his Italian friends], and of yourself [Dati] especially" (CM, XII,49). Milton even mentions a poem that he sent specifically to Dati, explaining that he intended the poem to "be no obscure proof of my love towards you" (CM, XII,49).

Milton's regard for Dati was mutual indeed. In a 1647 letter to Milton, Dati rejoices in receiving correspondence from his dear friend John Milton replying,

Oh, how many causes of joy immeasurable this little paper wakened in my heart!--a paper written by so talented and so dear a friend, that after so long a time and from so remote a province brings me news of the health, so longed for and so feared for, and assures me that so fresh and affectionate a memory of me is maintained in the gentle soul of John Milton. (CM, XII,297)

Clearly, the relationship between these two scholars extended beyond academy meetings. Their letters show a deep devotion for the other that developed over a period of continual exposure and interaction with one another. Dati's role as a Florentine citizen was to introduce Milton to its intellectual circles

and influential elite. His role as Milton's close friend was to expose him to the secrets of Florence--to paint for him the heart and soul of the city.

A critical figure in the Florentine soul, Galileo Galilei was one of the eminent men whom Milton was fortunate enough to meet in September 1638. Perhaps Carlo Dati, who studied for a time under the direction of Galileo, or Vincenzo, Galileo's son, introduced the two artists. Regardless, the blind astronomer deeply moved Milton, for Galileo is mentioned in *Areopagitica* (CM, IV, 329-330) as well as in *Paradise Lost* (I, 287-291 and V, 262). Confronting a man who was instrumental in transforming the seventeenth-century world view, not to mention travelling in circles which would introduce him to such a giant of science, is a testament to Milton's Florentine connections and exposure to great people and new ideas. Obviously, Milton's network of companions communed with the intellectuals of the day who were challenging the position of the earth in the universe, discussing the ramifications of the Inquisition, and questioning traditional roles for mankind.

In the same month Milton was introduced to Galileo, he witnessed a theatrical comedy that would shape the course of his poetic future. Andreini's *L'Adamo*, dedicated to Marie de Medici, was playing in either Milan or Florence at the time Milton saw the play--biographers differ over the exact location. This Italian interpretation of the fall of man portrayed many characters including Adam, Eve, God, Angels, and the Serpent. According to one of Milton's biographers, "*Milton pierc'd through the Absurdity of that Performance to the*

hidden Majesty of the Subject, which being altogether unfit for the Stage, yet might be (for the Genius of *Milton*, and for his only) the Foundation of an *Epick Poem*" (French 379). It is no coincidence that Milton's poem is not the Arthurian epic he planned before his trip to Italy, but instead a glorious tale of celestial beings, of war in heaven, deception in Eden, and man's ultimate fall. It is this crucial moment in the poet's life when *Paradise Lost* began to take shape, when the world of Italy became Milton's screening for his epic characters.

Rome, 1638-1639

The city of Rome offers an unforgettable glimpse into the development of mankind. From the Arch of Constantine to the Vatican, it is as intellectually and artistically pleasing as Florence. It was also a place where "the institution of the *accademia* was fully established and flourishing" at the time of Milton's sojourn (Haan 81). In *A Second Defense* Milton states, "Then I came to Rome. After the antiquity and ancient fame of that city had kept me for almost the space of two months ..." (CM, VIII, 122). Having sojourned for two months and then returning for "almost two months more," Milton must have been greatly enamoured of the Eternal city (*A Second Defense*, CM, VIII, 124). Indeed, he was intrigued by the wonders of Roman art and architecture during a time of great artistic expression under Pope Urban VIII. Although he does not mention Roman literary academies in any of his prose work or letters, evidence is extant that he was involved with a member of the Accademia dei Fantastici, Giovanni Salzilli (Haan 82). An encomium written by the Roman, Salzilli, praises Milton:

An Epigram, by Giovanni Salzilli, a Roman on John Milton,
Englishman, who deserves a coronal fashioned of the triple laurel
of poesy – Greek, Latin, and Italian.

Yield, Meles, yield; let Mincius, too, lowering his urn, yield; let
Sebetus cease to have Tasso forever on his tongue. But let the
Thames, victor now, sweep on with billows o’ertopping those of
every other stream, for, thanks to you, Milton, he will be, in his
single self, full match for the other three. (CM, I, 157)

Salzilli’s tribute provides substantiation that elite men in Rome, as well as Florence, held Milton in the highest regard, alongside the classical poetic giants such as Homer and Virgil. According to Haan, Milton’s poem *Ad Salsillum* “is a reply to the Latin tribute” of Giovanni Salzilli complimenting his skills as a poet and wishing him good health (85). Scholar James A. Freeman’s assertion that Salzilli was a greatly esteemed accademician because of his poetic contributions to the *Fantastici* suggests that Milton was privy to erudite coteries in Rome (97). But it is his three Latin epigrams, *Ad Leonoram*, flattering the soprano Leonora Baroni, which show Milton to be a true academician, following the encomiastic style popular in Italy at the time. Although the content of the poems is not central to this study, it is significant that Milton attempted a genre favored in the Italian academies and, thus, sought to ingratiate himself with the Roman intelligentsia (Haan 99).

Lucas Holstenius, curator of the Vatican museums, secretary and librarian to Cardinal Francesco Barberini, was one of these elite whom Milton was privileged to meet. A 1639 letter to Holstenius portrays the geniality and gratitude which existed between the two:

Although I both can and often do remember many courteous and most friendly acts done me by many in this my passage through Italy, yet, for so brief an acquaintance, I do not know whether I can justly say that from any one I have had greater proofs of goodwill than those which have come to me from you. For, when I went up to the Vatican for the purpose of meeting you, a total stranger to you, -- unless perchance anything had been previously said about me to you by Alexander Cherubini, -- you received me with the utmost courtesy. Admitted at once with politeness into the Museum, I was allowed to behold the superb collection of books ...
 . (CM, XII, 41)

The Florentine Alexander Cherubini probably did pass on a good word about Milton to Holstenius, furthering the notion that an atmosphere of intellectuals courting intellectuals prevailed within and between the major cities of Italy during the seventeenth century. However, the formality of the letter suggests that the connection was not as intimate as the Milton / Dati friendship. Nevertheless, Holstenius did respect the itinerant poet, enough to commission him to copy sections of a Medicean codex at the Laurentian library in Florence

(Parker 176). Further on in the letter, Milton expresses gratitude for Holstenius's "part to form a bond of friendship with [Milton]," indicating that Holstenius did much more than simply give Milton the requisite tour (CM, XII, 43).

Milton mentions Holstenius's graciousness in allowing him to view the Vatican museums, filled with manuscripts, artifacts, and impeccable Italian wall and ceiling frescos, as well as an array of sculptures and paintings. As stated previously, McColley provides penetrating appraisal of Eve and the Vatican ceiling frescos of Raphael and Michelangelo in *Milton's Eve*, in support of the notion that Milton was aware of misogynistic portrayals of the female.

Depictions of woman as muse and inspiration also exist in Vatican frescos as positive pictorials. This idea of Milton and his exposure to images of the heroic female will be addressed later in the study; however, it is important at this point to note that Milton was making connections with individuals who had the ability to furnish him access to the Italian art world and, thus, help him formulate his Eve.

Perhaps one of the most impressive connections Milton forged in the world of Italian art and politics is with Cardinal Francesco Barberini, nephew and counselor to Pope Urban VIII, as well as prime minister of Rome. Milton's acquaintance with Holstenius procured him an invitation to one of the Cardinal's renowned parties. In the same letter to Holstnius quoted previously, Milton describes the soiree:

Then, I could not but believe that it was in consequence of the mention you made of me to the most excellent Cardinal Francesco Barberini that, when he, a few days after, gave that public musical entertainment with truly Roman magnificence, he himself, waiting at the doors, and seeking me out in so great a crowd, almost seizing me by the hand indeed, admitted me within in a truly most honourable manner. (CM, XII, 41)

Milton sounds almost giddy in recounting his meeting with the Cardinal whose eminence in that era justified the praise and admiration the Englishman bestowed upon him. A subsequent appointment with the Cardinal intensified Milton's admiration:

Further, when, on this account, I went to pay my respects to him next day, you [Holstenius] again were the person that both made access for me and obtained me an opportunity of leisurely conversation with him -- an opportunity such as, with so great a man, --that whom, on the topmost summit of dignity, nothing more kind, nothing more courteous, --was truly, place and time considered, too ample rather than too sparing. (CM, XII, 43)

According to Milton's biographer William R. Parker, Cardinal Francesco Barberini was the "self-appointed protector of English interests at the Papal Court," a fact which explains his interest in the politically-conscious poet (177). It was consistent with Barberini's civic objectives to promote good relations with

the English traveler. By comparing the Cardinal to renowned Italian politicians, Milton attached a grandiose image to Barberini. He comments, “Nor do I think that, while he [Barberini] is alive, men will miss any more the Este, the Farnesi, or the Medici, formerly the *favourers* of learned men” (CM, XII, 45). Since these families are legendary for their patronage of the arts and political achievements, it is apparent that Milton placed the prime minister in the pantheon of Italy’s most eminent figures.

Barberini was one of the most prominent art patrons of the period, filling the salons and corridors of Casa Barberini with baroque works from Italy’s eminent painters. Milton acknowledges Barberini’s artistic patronage:

For the rest, you [Holstenius] will have bound me by a new obligation if you salute his Eminence the Cardinal with all possible respect in my name; whose great virtues, and regard for what is right, singularly evident in his readiness to forward all the liberal arts, are always present before my eyes ... (CM, XII, 45)

Always conscious of and willing to praise others for promoting the literary arts, Milton makes a point in the letter to Holstenius to mention his awareness of Barberini’s efforts to encourage all forms of art. His phrasing “present before my eyes” indicates not only Barberini’s overt actions in furthering the arts, but specifically visible and musical arts, including musical performances as well as paintings and sculptures. The lavish works of art that

adorned the Barberini Palace were, indeed, a visual banquet to the eyes of Milton.

Naples, 1638-1639

After two months of sampling the delights of Rome, Milton traveled to Naples and befriended Giovanni Battista Manso, Marquis of Villia and founder of the Accademia degli Oziosi. According to Haan, there were “no fewer than thirty academies” in Naples at the time of Milton’s visit (118). If Milton called upon any academies while in Naples, the Oziosi might have been his choice due to his connection with Manso. However, in *A Second Defense* Milton mentions Manso’s limitations in exposing him to more of Neapolitan life. Milton writes, “When I left, he seriously excused himself because, though he had been most desirous of showing me much greater attention, he had not been able to do so in that city because I had not been willing to be more guarded in religion” (CM,VIII, 122-124). The people of southern Italy have traditionally been known for a more extreme fundamentalist perspective. It is hard to say whether Milton felt sufficiently threatened to avoid the academies where his religious views might be persecuted, or if Manso did not invite Milton to such events because he feared religious strife. At any rate, there are no records of Milton having attended any Neapolitan academies. Nevertheless, his friendship with Manso allowed him access to many of the city’s wonders. Milton asserts, “By [Manso] I was treated in the most friendly fashion as long as I stayed there. Indeed he took

me himself through the whole city and the court of the Viceroy, and more than once he came himself to my hotel to see me" (CM, VIII, 122-124). A personal tour by a citizen of the city of Naples with its Greco-Roman streets and architecture must have been exhilarating for the poet. Although some sort of religious tension prevailed between the two intellectuals, Milton held Manso in the highest regard nevertheless. These sentiments are evident in Milton's Neapolitan encomium, "Manso." Respectively, the "two cups," mentioned in "Damon's Epitaph," which are "Carved with a double design of [Manso's] own well-skilled invention" was, perhaps, a literary gift to Milton or literally a pair of goblets (CM,I,312-315).

Unfortunately for the Englishman, the news of Charles Diodati's death (Milton's friend at Cambridge) reached him in late 1638 or early 1639, most likely during his stay in Naples. "Thyrsis, having set out to travel for mental improvement, received news when abroad of Damon's death....," Milton reveals in "Damon's Epitaph" found in his 1645 *Poems*. It is also at this time in which the poet discovered that civil war plagues his country. In *A Second Defense* Milton pronounces, "The sad news of the English civil war recalled me; for I thought it shameful, while my countrymen were fighting for their liberty at home, that I should be peacefully traveling for culture" (CM,VIII, 124). The news of the death of his dearest friend along with the information of civil unrest at home distressed Milton, but evidently he was not too concerned, for he spent about four more

months in Rome, Florence, and Venice “peacefully traveling for culture” (CM, VIII, 124).

In *The Reason of Church Government*, Milton establishes a set curriculum for an aspiring intellectual. Including a spiritual connection with God, he calls for an “industrious and select reading, steady observation,” and “insight into all seemly and generous arts and affairs” (CM,III, 241). This passage alone provides evidence of Milton’s awareness of and interest in the visual arts. Milton’s Italian connections have now been established, as well as particular experiences explored which provided exposure to female iconography. Let us now turn to the world of patronage and painting under Urban VIII in order to better understand the impact of baroque art on Roman citizens, foreign travelers, and specifically the image of the heroic female Milton would have encountered in his Italian sojourn.

Chapter III

The Popes and their relatives were the quintessential artistic patrons throughout the Renaissance due to their wealth and power. The reign of Urban VIII marked a surge in papal commissions from such illustrious artists as Gianlorenzo Bernini, Pietro da Cortona, and Andrea Sacchi. Seventeenth-century Rome was a city bustling with the production of contemporary art while celebrating the already established art of antiquity. Milton traveled through Rome while the city was undergoing a crucial artistic metamorphosis. His acquaintance with Francesco Barberini, one of the leading art patrons of the time, illustrates the fact that the poet communed with men who dictated the art and etiquette of their milieu.

Throughout Early Modern Italy, Cardinals chosen under their presiding Pope have been some of the greatest art collectors of smaller commissions. The Borghese and Spada Galleries house works owned by Cardinal Scipione Borghese and Cardinal Bernardino Spada respectively. In these galleries one can find Bernini's *Pluto and Proserpine* or Lorenzo's *San Sebastiano*, divine works of art produced in a smaller time frame than, say, Bernini's *Baldacchino*, which took approximately nine years and involved despoiling the bronze roof of the Pantheon (Haskell 34). This wealth and energetic art production made Rome a viable atmosphere for exposure to the arts.

Relationships between client and artist were developed and maintained in a variety of ways. According to art historian Francis Haskell, "the closest

relationship possible between patron and artist was the one frequently described by seventeenth-century writers as *servitù particolare*" (6). Typically, the artist boarded with the patron and regularly produced works of art. He was paid at market price and also allotted an allowance. All necessary tools or trips undertaken in connection with the work in progress were funded by the client. This form of commission was highly advantageous for an artist, placing him in a position to meet other noblemen as potential clients while also making a name for himself in the art world (Haskell 7). Few families could afford to support painters in this privileged manner, and thus it was more common for artists to work in their own studios and accept commissions from a wider pool of people.

Due to Italian city growth and development in the Renaissance, the demand for painters was intense. Art historian Hayden B. J. Maginnis suggests that this atmosphere generated "new working relations among artists," such as collaboration between artists in order to complete a fresco or the employment of the artist's children (25). In fact, the artist's workshop typically constituted both apprentices and family members. Orazio Gentileschi's workshop was made up of students as well as his daughter, Artemisia Gentileschi, who, arguably, outranks her father artistically.

From the halls of the Vatican to the Piazza Navona, Rome was a mural waiting to be painted by the leading artists and sculptors of the day, a mecca for painters and sculptors from around the world. Every street corner tempted the eye with some form of artistic expression. It is this world into which we will

delve in order to better apprehend the scope and richness of the art world during Milton's journey.

Painting largely during the reign of Pope Paul V, Caravaggio (1573-1610) is remembered as one of the most innovative painters of the early seventeenth century. While his early works treat sense-oriented, bacchanal self portraits, it is his later work, such as the *Judith and Holofernes* or the *Calling of St. Matthew*, which established a naturalistic trend in art (Moir 1-4). Even after Caravaggio's death in 1610 due to a bout with malaria, this style of art was quite popular in mid-seventeenth century Rome. The use of chiaroscuro, an artistic technique characterized by "theatrical depictions of the human form by a strong light against inky-dark backgrounds," left an indelible imprint upon Caravaggio's followers, including Giovanni Baglione, Tommaso Salini, Orazio Gentileschi and, Artemisia Gentileschi later who introduced the technique in Florence and Naples (Heller 29). According to Alfred Moir, "Caravagists specialized in oil paintings, commissions for which kept them busy; Caravaggesque painting flourished, particularly because it was so distinctive among contemporary manners. It must still have seemed novel and original" (67). Indeed, this oeuvre gained great popularity and attracted younger artists. Moir suggests that this attraction was due, in part, to the atmosphere of the Caravaggesque workshop. Novice artists could become followers of the movement without becoming indebted to their Caravaggesque senior. Also, "their relation to their seniors apparently was more as casual protégés rather than as student assistants ..." (Moir 68). Thus, art in

the mode of Caravaggio flourished in Rome for quite some time. It is practically impossible to visit Rome even today and not see the influences of the Caravaggesque movement in various churches and at the Spada, Farnese, and Borghese Galleries.

This play with light and shadow of Caravaggesque naturalism contrasted sharply with a new movement growing in Rome during Urban's pontificate. Unfortunately, by 1620 Caravaggism began to wane. But a few masters remained in Rome, the tradition of naturalistic scenes well established as a respected art medium. Pietro da Cortona's (1596-1669) *Divine Providence* in the Barberini palace marked a new artistic style of ceiling frescos that depicted numerous figures continually ascending toward heaven into an almost limitless sky. It was politically advantageous for popes to patronize painters who originated from their same region or city. Thus, Pietro, a Tuscan, became quite sought after during the reign of Urban VIII. Amid the team of artists working with Cortona was Andrea Sacchi, known for his work *Divine Wisdom*, also in the Barberini palace. Although not as artistically impressive as Cortona's ceiling fresco, both works, according to John B. Scott, are representative of Barberini nepotism and dominance in Rome during Urban VIII's pontificate. Cortona's pictorial appears to contain the Barberini ruling family as "metaphorically projected into the heavens, vicariously enjoying celestial dominion," Morray Roston asserts (12).

Bernini's *Baldacchino* is, perhaps, one of the grandest representations of Urban VIII's power. Bernini produced many sculptural wonders for Cardinal Scipione Borghese, including his *David* (1623-1624) and *Apollo and Daphne* (1622-1625). His work for particular churches, such as the *Ecstasy of St. Theresa* in Santa Maria della Victoria incorporated natural light, architecture, and sculpture in a decidedly baroque manner. Urban VIII, however, had the fortune and power to challenge the artistic hand of Bernini. The hundred-foot-high bronze *Baldacchino* stands majestically over the tomb of St. Peter. The twisting columns are covered with Barberini bees and the Barberini sun blazes from the capitals, while the leaves crawling up the columns are those of the laurel, yet another family emblem. Bernini is also recognized as having designed the august St. Peter's square in the 1620s, a series of columns which extend out from the basilica in an oval fashion.

Numerous Milton scholars have speculated on the influence of baroque art on the poet. Rebecca W. Smith suggests St. Peter's Basilica as the inspiration for Milton's Pandaemonium in *Paradise Lost*. Likewise, Philipp E. Fehl asserts that Milton echoes a description of Bernini's baldacchino in his Pandaemonium in *Paradise Lost*:

Built like a Temple, where *Pilasters* round
 Were set, and Doric pillars overlaid
 With Golden Architrave; nor did there want
 Cornice or Frieze, with bossy Sculptures grav'n,

The Roof was fretted Gold (I, 713-717)

Indeed, the *Baldacchino* does appear as a temple dripping with gold.

According to Fehl, “the pits of the Vatican foundry in which the casting was done could still be seen when Milton was in Rome in 1639; they, together with Bernini’s workshop, which was constantly busy, were a favorite sight to show the privileged visitors” (243). John Milton was just such a privileged visitor, with connections including Lusas Holstenius and Barberini himself. The *Baldacchino* was relatively new during Milton’s visit; therefore, it is difficult to imagine that Rome’s leading noblemen would not boast about such a colossal creation and pique Milton’s interest.

While Pope Urban VIII was establishing his contribution to Roman art and architecture, his three nephews were also propagating the arts. Francesco Barberini was, perhaps, one of the greatest art patrons of the era. Francesco was appointed cardinal at the age of twenty-six. His first political mission was a trip to Paris in 1625 as a special legate to consult with Cardinal Richelieu as tension mounted between France and Spain. As a diplomatic envoy from Italy, Francesco was dispatched to encourage an armistice between the two countries and urge that no capitulation to the Huguenots should be permitted (Haskell 44). Although the trip was a complete failure for Francesco, he was introduced to the glories of French art during his diplomatic mission. According to Haskell,

He had set out with a brilliant retinue of friends and advisors
which included the most cultivated and learned of all Italian art

patrons, Cassiano dal Pozzo. They took advantage of their social opportunities and made special visits to examine the art treasures of the Louvre and Fontainebleau. (44)

Obviously, Francesco was enchanted with all forms of art, French or Italian. He accepted a gift of seven tapestries from Louis XIII, although he was strictly advised to decline favors while abroad (Haskell 44). Francesco participated in one other foreign relation campaign to Madrid before settling in Rome. He was to remain there until the death of his uncle, forging social connections and financially supporting the Roman arts. Francesco's riches and influence

were used largely to promote the arts, sciences and learning to which he was so devoted. His court became the centre of artistic and intellectual life in the city; he himself began to make an important impact on the great achievements which already marked the new reign. (Haskell 44)

This new impact developed during his membership on a committee which supervised the art that decorated St. Peter's Basilica. New painters like Cortona and Sacchi benefited from Francesco's fresh, innovative influence on a committee that had previously favored the established Bolognese artists to decorate the basilica (Haskell 45).

Francesco Barberini's greatest success at displaying his support for the arts occurred with the decoration of the Barberini Palace. The royal residence

incorporated an already existent sixteenth-century building with additional new construction. Francesco paid 55,500 scudi for the palace on the 18 December 1625. Subsequently, he gave the palace to his younger brother, Taddeo, to supervise construction. After construction was complete, Francesco adorned the halls of the palace with his vast art collection (Kirwin 193-194).

While Carlo Maderno was the official architect of the palace, many other famous artists would have their hand in construction, including Borromini and Bernini. After the structure was completed in 1633, Taddeo Barberini commenced decoration of the interior, adding Andrea Sacchi to the already illustrious list of participating artists, to fresco a ceiling vault of one of the main reception rooms (Haskell 55). The commission of *Divine Wisdom*, derived from the Apocryphal Wisdom of Solomon, utilizes female forms to represent Eternity, Sanctity, Purity, Divine Wisdom, Divinity and many other attributes ascribed of the Barberini family. The treatment of the female body in this particular fresco in relation to Milton's Eve will be analyzed later in the paper. However, it is significant to mention this fresco in the present context because it constitutes evidence of Taddeo's patronage of the arts.

One of the palace's many treasures includes the innovative ceiling fresco of Pietro da Cortona in the main reception room of the palace, *Glorification of the Reign of Urban VIII*. As mentioned previously, this fresco marks a new baroque style of limitless space adorned with floating figures. According to Murray Roston, "Cortona was just putting the finishing touches to his important ceiling

fresco" during Milton's two visits (49). Perhaps Milton conversed with Francesco under Sacchi's ceiling fresco since the main reception room was not complete. At any rate, the bustle and activity of fresco work would have been apparent to Milton during his visit; in other words, he would have seen Barberini patronage at its zenith. Roston suggests further that Cortona's style of infinite sky and corporal beings influenced Milton's descriptions of heaven in *Paradise Lost* (80-115).

One of the great attractions to the Barberini palace was the theatre constructed by Pietro da Cortona, which supposedly seated 3,000 guests (Haskell 56). According to Haskell, one of the first operas to be performed at the palace theatre was *S. Alessio*. Bernini was, of course, the main architect for set and stage construction (Roston 49). It is in Milton's letter to Lucas Holstenius that we discover that he attended one of the Barberini's many musical events at the theatre, greeted by the cardinal with great enthusiasm. Other foreign travelers are recorded as having visited the Barberini theatre and been impressed with "the two young Barberini Cardinals affably greeting their guests and begging them to squeeze closer together to allow more space..." (Haskell 57).

Urban VIII and his nephews dictated the trends in artistic style by extending their patronage throughout Rome, but they were hardly the Eternal City's only patrons. The religious orders also promoted art appreciation. For example the Jesuits, Oratorians, and Theatines competed aggressively with Urban VIII for the talented painters and sculptors of the day. Unfortunately, the

church could not match Urban's wealth. Haskell asserts that, "during the reign of Urban VIII neither Bernini nor Pietro da Cortona produced anything significant for the Gesù despite the fact that both men were closely associated with the Jesuits" (65). Noble families typically commissioned work in private capellas, but the church ordinarily had no voice in the style or story depicted (Haskell 66). It was only after the death of Urban VIII during the reign of Innocent X when massive baroque ceiling fresco work appeared in churches. Andrea Pozzo's *Missionary Work of the Jesuits* in Sant'Ignazio, Rome (1691-94) and Baciccio's *Triumph of the Sacred Name of Jesus* in Il Gesù, Rome (1676-79) are two fine examples of later seventeenth-century baroque ceiling work.

Caravaggio pre-dates the reign of Urban VIII and his monopoly of great artists. Some of his greatest pieces, commissioned by Cardinal del Monte, reside in the Contarelli Chapel in the Church of San Luigi dei Francesi in Rome. He was commissioned to paint three pictures of Saint Matthew, the most exquisite of which is the *Calling of Saint Matthew* (1599-1600). Unfortunately, he had to flee Rome in 1606 after murdering a referee at a tennis match (Frederick Hartt 772). Thus, the affluent religious orders could no longer commission his work. The presence of his work in San Luigi is evidence of the church's desire for contemporary, unconventional art.

The likelihood of Milton's entering any of the local Catholic churches in Rome seems highly questionable. During his voyage he was quite candid about his Protestant beliefs, defending them whenever challenged. Indeed, his

openness concerning religion matters apparently provoked threats upon his life from the English Jesuits. Milton states in a *Second Defense*,

When I was about to return to Rome, merchants warned me that they had learned by letter that if I returned to Rome, plots were being prepared against me by the English Jesuits, because I had spoken too freely about religion. For I had made up my mind never to begin an argument about religion myself in those parts; but if questioned about my faith, not to conceal anything, whatever I might suffer. (CM, VIII, 124)

Based on this passage, as well as the fact of religious tension between Milton and Manso in Naples, it seems fair to speculate that Milton would not have wanted to enter any of the Jesuit churches simply for fear of his life. It is important to note the patronistic endeavors of these churches, however, because it furthers the notion that, in every aspect, Rome was a city that thrived on art production—that art was central to Rome’s identity.

The private patrons of Rome and the collections on display in their palaces, provided a more congenial setting for Milton’s exposure to the arts. Paolo Giordano II Orsini and Cassiano dal Pozzo are two Roman luminaries who stand out as important patrons of all aspects of the arts. No documentation exists of Milton’s knowledge of these men of which I am aware. However, they mingled in the same erudite coteries as Francesco Barberini and Lucas Holstenius and, thus, were imminently accessible to Milton.

Paolo Giordano II Orsini, Duke of Bracciano, was a Tuscan who had “a passionate love of music and spectacle which remained his prime interest in the end of his life” (Haskell 95). A cultivator of the arts, he is credited with publishing the many poems written in adoration of Leonora Baroni in 1639 under the title *Applausi poetici alle glorie delle signora Leonora Baroni*. Milton, aspiring to fulfill the image of a true Italian academician, joined in this fervent praise in his three poems to the soprano. Although his tributes are not published in the volume, he obviously associated with men whose works were, thereby linking himself with Giordano’s elites.

Giordano frequented Barberini circles, although he belonged to the Spanish political faction (Haskell 96). He was a limited patron in comparison to the Barberini family, but he did acquire a wax model of his head from Bernini, as well as works from Pietro Tacca, Claude, and Andrea Podestà, while also commissioning the decoration of churches on his estates in southern Italy (Haskell 97). According to Haskell, Giordano’s activity as a private patron made an impact on the community of Rome because he was “a friend of *virtuosi*, poets, singers, all of whom could meet in his palace,” among the elite men of Rome and revel in the arts (98). Giordano provided a milieu wherein artists could share their talents and scholars could debate literary theories. He encouraged an energetic interplay of all the arts so that a traveler such as Milton, knowledgeable about poetry and music, would also be exposed to painters and actors. Because women were not allowed to perform in religious celebrations at this time,

Giordano's private palace would have provided a secluded venue for Lenora Baroni to sing for her many admirers. Perhaps it was in Giordano's home or in a similar environment where Milton heard this "winged angel from the celestial ranks" sing ("To Leonora singing in Rome," qtd. in Haan, 189).

One of the most significant patrons during the reign of Urban VIII who, Haskell asserts, "exerted an influence on the arts wholly out of proportion to his income or limited political power," was Cassiano dal Pozzo (98). Introduced earlier as an intimate companion of Barberini, Cassiano, like Giordano, was a Tuscan--born in Turin, educated in Bologna, and cultivated as a youth in Pisa (Haskell 98). He enjoyed a close friendship with Galileo, which likely was engendered during his stay in Pisa. His interest in the sciences and his membership in the Accademia dei Lincei, a scientific society, may have been inspired by this relationship. Carlo Dati, Milton's Florentine friend who studied under Galileo, published a text on Cassiano's art collection in 1664, entitled *Della lodi di Cassiano dal Pozzo*. The two scholars probably met as youths in Pisa through their connection with Galileo. Cassiano was widely respected as a serious scholar and patron. Haskell states that his estimated salary was "six thousand *livres* annually, and he used these entirely to promote the arts and sciences" (99). His palace on the Via Chiavari contained numerous works including those of Caravaggio, Pieter Van Laer, Viviano Codazzi, and Simon Vouet (Haskell 102). Amazingly, Cassiano developed a project to catalogue the art and architecture of antiquity employing draftsmen and artists to copy the

city's artistic wealth. According to Haskell, Cassiano called this compilation his "'paper museum'" (101). It is this catalogue of the remnants of Roman civilization which Dati reviews in his publication.

Cassiano dal Pozzo, like Paolo Giordano, was a member of the Barberini circle who was enmeshed in papal politics. His friendship with Dati, Galileo, and Barberini suggests he traveled in the same circles as Milton and that the two were acquainted with one another. Part of what distinguished a Roman nobleman was his patronage of the arts and the society in which he entrenched himself. From every angle, Milton would have encountered individuals of the Italian political elite who were scientists, singers, poets, and patrons.

However, the world of art was not completely dominated by the church and the aristocracy. In early seventeenth-century Rome there existed an art world outside the bounds of the politically and socially eminent. Art also thrived on the streets of Rome, a phenomenon which would have been inescapable to Milton's eye. Haskell maintains, "with the increasing attraction of the city to tourists and growing economic uncertainties conditions of patronage gradually loosened and we come across an even larger number of professional art dealers in direct contact with living painters" (120). The history of Caravaggio's development as an artist presents a prime example of a painter who sold his early works to an art dealer. These art dealers sold a variety of objects d'art aside from paintings, including rosaries, guilding, and religious goods (Haskell 120-121).

Coinciding with the development and growth of the professional art dealer was the evolution of the movable gallery picture. This innovation permitted the production of smaller works which were accessible and affordable to more patrons. The stylistic trend which diverged from the fresco was “a largely Venetian innovation of over a century earlier which had made a decisive impact on Roman collecting,” Haskell contends (10). This mode of art provided the artist greater freedom of expression. Art connoisseurs more easily acquired works by their favorite painter, but were less interested in the subject matter of the work. The gallery picture led to such a huge exchange of art that it was quite impossible to keep track of where all of a painter’s works resided (Haskell 10).

Rome provided an environment conducive to such avid consumption of art. Haskell provides extensive documentation on art exhibitions in Rome in the seventeenth-century. Art exhibitions typically occurred on saints’ days and festivals. According to him, “The feast of Corpus Domini above all was associated with the display of pictures ...” (125). One would not expect to find the eminent painters of the day at such events, but newcomers to Rome and lesser known artists in the community who were trying to make a name for themselves might, indeed, be in attendance.

Perhaps one of the most widely recorded art exhibitions during the seventeenth century was one held annually in the Pantheon on the nineteenth of March in celebration of the feast day of Saint Joseph. This exhibit was sponsored by the Congregazione dei Virtuosi (a confraternity of artists) who, through a

process of review, displayed works by both old and contemporary artists (Haskell 126). Many other exhibits were established by the end of the century which diffused art among the people of Rome, as well as creating an atmosphere in which artists from different countries and backgrounds could share various genres.

Even if Milton were a complete misanthrope during his stay in Rome (in reality, he was quite the social butterfly), the accessibility of art during the period of his sojourn would make it virtually impossible for him to ignore the artistic wonders of the city. Artists could be found on many a street corner waiting to explain the use of color and style in their paintings to a curious traveler. With this in mind, along with Milton's affluent Roman and Florentine connections, the likelihood of his exposure to the arts becomes virtually obvious.

Chapter IV

In her acclaimed work, *Milton's Eve*, Diane McColley successfully argues that "Milton sought to redeem [Eve]," and woman as well, "from a reductive literary and iconographic tradition, and to establish a regenerative reading of her role" (4). Many Milton scholars argue that he consciously fashioned an Eve who exercises free will with balanced qualities of strength and vulnerability in her persona. Prelapsarian Eve masterly proves her skills in poetic verse and exhibits responsibility and logic, not only as an autonomous being but also as Adam's worthy "meet help." Even postlapsarian Eve seems heroic yet susceptible in Book X of *Paradise Lost* as she attempts to shoulder sole responsibility for the Fall. Milton's valiant Eve selflessly attempts to persuade God to place full blame and punishment upon her, a position which Christ ultimately assumes to redeem mankind. Therefore, Milton's Eve is neither weak nor sinister, as are so many of the depictions of her in Renaissance etchings and frescos. She is, in fact, a potent, heroic woman. Milton was working against entrenched iconographic and literary traditions of woman as Eve who succumbs to temptation and eats the fruit of knowledge, bringing woe to mankind.

Writing in opposition to the "reductive critical" literary and iconographic depictions of Eve, Milton was fully aware of this historical bias, which had its roots in the Middle Ages and its representations in Renaissance art. By analyzing these misogynistic conceptions of Eve, one can envision the task for Milton in forming his "New Eve." Just as Pygmalion chiseled his image of the

ideal woman--Galatea--Milton molded his consummate Eve, and in a sense, a new paragon of womanhood for the seventeenth century.

The early Church Fathers of the fourth and fifth centuries, who fled the material world with its myriad temptations and led lives of monasticism and extreme asceticism, were largely responsible for creating the archetype of woman as seductress. According to medieval scholar Christa Grössinger, evil to these clergymen was manifested primarily in the form of temptations of the flesh. The engraving *The Temptation of St Anthony* by Lucas van Leyden (Fig. 1) depicts a devil-woman temptress attempting to seduce St Anthony outside his hermitage. Grössinger asserts, "her evil intent is clearly illustrated by her horned headdress and the jar symbolizing vanity; she is associated with the Babylonian Whore" (30). Grössinger points out that St Anthony's life as a hermit was recorded by St Athanasius and St Jerome who both "advocated a life of asceticism and whose negative views on women--expressed in Jerome's *Adversus Jovinianum*, c. 393--influenced much medieval thinking" (3). St Augustine (354-430), author of *The Good Marriage*, and Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), author of *Summa Theologiae*, are two historical figures well known for their religious debates on women and the carnal temptation. Grössinger claims that "all these early Bible commentators, missionaries and Church Fathers had in common a life of single-minded dedication to asceticism which only encouraged their wariness of women"(3). According to Samuel Farmer, the

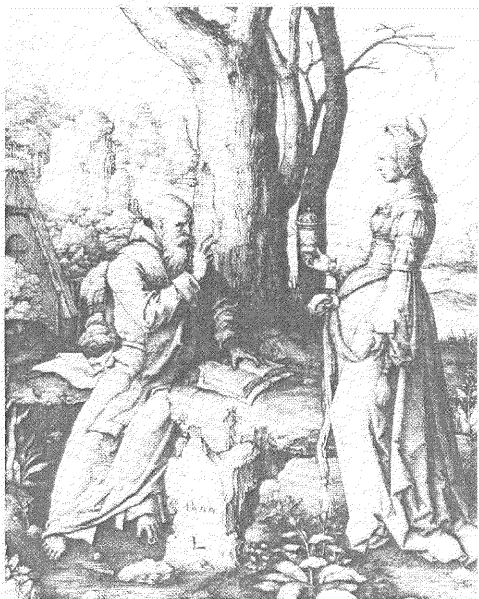


Figure 1 – *The Temptation of St. Anthony* by Lucas van Leyden

religious debate over women in the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries caused woman's status to decline and misogynistic ideas to intensify (520).

Grössinger reinforces Farmer's deduction:

it can be seen that in this period the Virgin Mary became more and more revered and idealized, while woman remained forever Eve, thus widening the gulf between good and bad. The two polarities, of Mary the Virgin and Eve, of good and evil, came to dominate medieval life and thought in images of Life and Death, of Virtues and Vices, of Body and Soul, of the Fountain of Life and the Fountain of Love, and of the good and bad women from the Old and New Testaments. (5-6)

By the end of the tenth century, the polarization of the female as Mary and Eve reached its apex in the development of the cult of the Virgin by the order of Cluny (Kraus 84). The growth of Mariological iconography strategically contrasted with already existing portrayals of the seductress Eve. Interestingly, Mary was elevated to a stature unattainable by the common woman. According to Henry Kraus, it was in representations of Mary, "in the glorification of the Virgin ... the Woman-Without-Sin, the non-woman Woman, the anti-Eve" that monks were encouraged to focus their love and devotion (84). The confrontation between the two female personae was reinforced by the inversion of the letters "Eva" and "Ave." This word play is evident in a Latin poem by Peter Damian, an eleventh-century reformer:

That angel who greets you with "Ave"

Reverses sinful Eva's name.

Lead us back, O holy Virgin,

Whence the falling sinner came (qtd. in Kraus 84).

Mary is closely associated with Christ and rebirth in the iconography of the Renaissance, and, thus, is depicted as the appropriate subject for male devotion. Eve, however, is the personification of abject evil and even death, and it is Eve who is affiliated with ordinary women. Her image as a siren is portrayed most dramatically to the illiterate masses through etchings and frescos. The title page of the Feast of Corpus Christi from the Missal of the Archbishop of Salzburg (Fig. 2) gives a clear representation of the dichotomy between the Virgin Mary and Eve. Both women stand by the tree of life and death. Mary hands out the fruit of life, while Eve feeds mankind the apple of death. Similarly, the images of Death and Temptation are quite gruesome in a painting of Adam and Eve by Hans Baldung Grien (Fig. 3) from the early sixteenth century. In this work, Eve or woman, always the temptress, entices a male figure who represents both Death and Adam. She mischievously hides an apple behind her back with her right hand, while grasping a snake's tail with her left. Death/Adam grips Eve's arm, completing the cycle of death. Eve's visage epitomizes the flirtatious gaze one might imagine of Andrew Marvell's "Coy Mistress." In a similar contemporary painting, Grien portrays death literally consuming a woman while disheveling her attire (Fig. 4). Although the victim is



Figure 2 – Title-page of the Feast of Corpus Christi

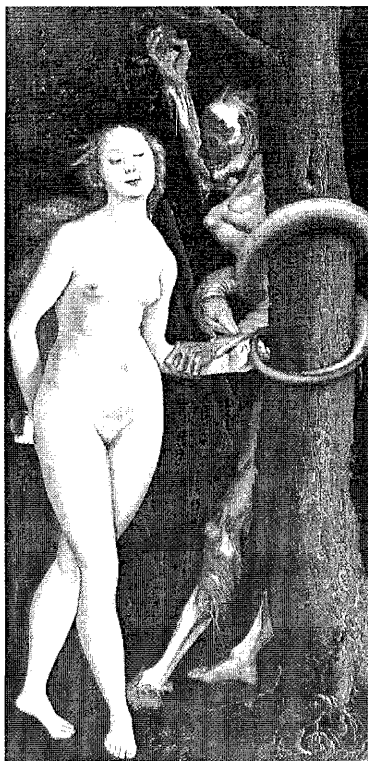


Figure 3 – *Eve, the Serpent and Death* by Hans Baldung Grien



Figure 4 – *Death Seizing A Woman* by Hans Baldung Grien

an anonymous female, she still takes on the appearance of the seductress who deserves her fate, and thus many general representations of women are representations of the tainted Eve.

The stalwart, heroic female was present in the iconography of the Middle Ages, symbolizing chastity and civic virtue. She may be positioned in the middle of a continuum between Eve and Mary, providing a positive and powerful persona attainable for the common woman. Just as Milton was conscious of medieval misogynistic treatments of the female, he was also aware of historically positive depictions of her. The “women worthies” were created as a “female counterpart to the cycles of nine male heroes, the ‘nine worthie, or *Neuf Preux*’” (Gerrard 145). These women (Fig. 5) were typically grouped in threes including: the Jews: Esther, Judith, and Jael; the Christians: Helena, Brigetta, and Elizabeth; the pagans: Lucretia, Veturia, and Virginia (Gerrard 145).

The story of Judith and Holofernes often is depicted in the iconography of Europe. Because she plays such a significant role in art as well as in written texts, we will look at specific representations of her as indicative of the “women worthies” as a whole. Described concisely, her story can be found in the apocryphal book Judith. This heroic woman, empowered by God, decapitated General Holofernes who was commanded by the Assyrian king Nebuchadnezzar. This act of civic virtue freed the Israelite citizens of the town of Bethulia from the tyrannous grasp of Nebuchadnezzar. The textual view of Judith, dated from the second century B.C.E, was welcomed by the early church



Figure 5 – *The Eighteen Worthies* by Hans Burghmair

fathers who praised her actions in the name of her God and city. According to Elena Ciletti, “from the start, considerable stress was placed on the chastity of the heroine, rooted in her explicit denial of any ‘pollution’ at the hands of Holofernes” (41-42). Judith was, indeed, a pious widow who adopted a life of fasting and seclusion after her husband’s death. In many ways, Ciletti asserts, Judith was paired with Mary in their conquest of Lucifer:

Mary through her chaste conception of Christ, who broke the reign
of the devil on earth, and Judith through her chaste dispatching of
the devil’s emissary, the lewd, proud, and idolatrous Antichrist,
Holofernes. (42)

Saint Clement of Rome in the first century praised Judith for her strength and ability to overcome the weakness typically characterized by Eve. Judith, like the other “women worthies,” was a “being strengthened by the grace of God” who “performed numerous manly exploits” (qtd. in Ciletti 63). This acclamation appears in a thirteenth-century depiction of Judith on the north porch at Chartres Cathedral (Fig. 6). Reverently resting on her knees, Judith pours ashes over her head while invoking God’s assistance in her heroic mission. Carved on the edifice of the same cathedral is a depiction of Esther (Fig. 7), another heroic female, pleading for the freedom of the Israelites at the feet of Ahasuerus (Kraus 88).



Figure 6 – *Praying Judith*



Figure 7 – *Queen Esther*

Representations of heroic women in the Middle Ages provided hope for the common woman that she, too, through divine inspiration and guidance, could become a pious, heroic female capable of defending her people. Although a well-established pattern of misogyny in Europe continued to flourish in the Renaissance, the heroic female played an active part in deflecting negative conceptions of woman as the debate over female equality continued.

Renaissance depictions of Eve intensified the established negative portrayal of her in medieval times. Mentioned earlier, Hans Baldung Grien, a pupil of Albrecht Dürer, was a German painter in Strasbourg who perpetuated this pejorative view of the female in the North. Roland Frye's *Milton's Imagery and the Visual Arts* provides a methodical compilation of depictions of Eve as representative of abject evil. Important to this analysis, however, are those particular paintings privy to Milton while he was in Italy. Thus, we will examine Italian fresco works in the Vatican, a prime source of misogynistic illustrations of Eve. McColley argues,

... many Renaissance paintings give greater prominence to the Fall, appear to ascribe more fault to woman and the passions of the flesh, and allot less space to the rest of creation than earlier ones had done, and than seventeenth-century northern versions less influenced by classicism would do. (*A Gust* 31)

McColley's assertion that Italian Renaissance paintings point directly to woman's sinfulness is valid. She also maintains that "pictures of Adam and Eve

in innocence, after God has married and instructed them, are extremely rare" (*Milton's Eve* 5). In fact, it is the Creation and immediate Fall which are depicted in many Italian frescos. One only has to view Michelangelo's portrayal of Eve in the ceiling fresco of the Sistine Chapel (Fig. 8) or Raphael's ceiling fresco of Adam and Eve in the Stanza della Segnatura in the Vatican (Fig. 9) to see clear evidence of misogynistic tendencies. McColley analyzes the Sistine Chapel fresco: "Michelangelo's linear program, however, makes Eve's creation from Adam's side seem to lead directly to the Fall; and the Serpent, with its woman's face and torso, resembles his coarsened fallen Eve" (*A Gust* 30). Raphael's image of the Serpent in the Stanza della Segnatura, like Michelangelo's, is half woman. McColley argues further that, "not only is the serpent half woman, it is a shadowed Eve: the same half-turned face, straight nose, bowed mouth, and rounded breasts, the same hair...the Serpent is the dark side of Eve herself" (*Milton's Eve* 8). Even students and collaborators of Raphael who labored on particular frescos in the Raphael Loggia in the Vatican, painted the faces of Eve and the serpent as identical.

All images of the female were not negative, however. Just as opprobrious views continued into the Renaissance, so too did enlightened treatments. Interestingly, feminism dates not from 1900 but from 1400 when Christine de Pizan "first raised a literary voice on behalf of the intellectual and biological equality of women" (Gerrard 142-143). Pizan composed a series of works in defense of women, one of the most important being *City of Ladies* (1405), in

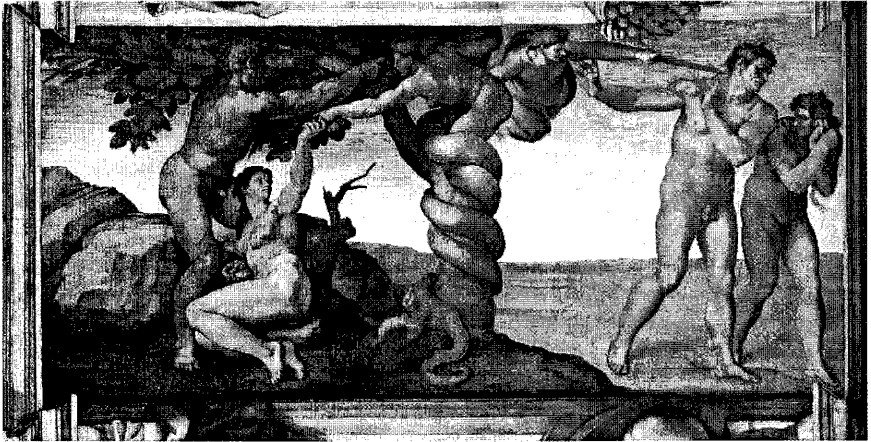


Figure 8 – *The Temptation and Fall of Adam and Eve* by Michelangelo

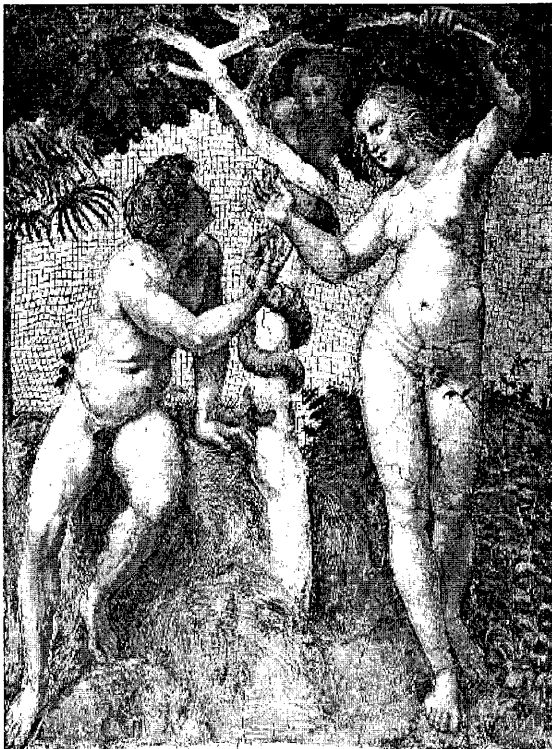


Figure 9 – *The Temptation of Adam and Eve* by Raphael

which she ponders the proliferation of misogynistic attitudes in her era. Her writings inaugurated the literary debate known at the *querelle des femmes* - the argument about women (Wiesner 15-19). This literary disputation became the mobilization for both early feminist conjecture and misogynistic satire. In Italy, for example, the Renaissance humanists such as Boccaccio, Bruni, and Castiglione argued in favor of gender equality. According to Gerrard, Boccaccio's *De Claris Mulieribus* (1361) included woodcut illustrations of heroic, intelligent women (145-146). Baldesar Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier* provides insightful commentary on the intelligence and equality of woman. Its protagonist Magnifico Giuliano states, "the male cannot be more perfect than the female, since both the one and the other are included under the species man, and they differ in their accidents and not their essence" (218). Magnifico Giuliano praises women stating, "I say that everything men can understand, women can too and where a man's intellect can penetrate, so along with it can a woman's" (218). Renaissance humanists used the "woman worthies" as examples of paragons of female heroic virtue. Hans Burghmair's *Esther, Judith, and Jael* (1519) (Fig. 10) provides a positive Renaissance depiction of the female (Gerrard 143,145). These prints reflect an embracing of the positive worth of intrepid, historical and biblical female figures. Christine de Pizan also used Judith in her *City of the Ladies*, at which Ciletti remarks, Judith was a "a 'regular' in the 'protofeminist' literature of the *querelle des femmes*" (60).



Figure 10 – Esther, Judith, and Jael by Hans Burgkmair

However, the misogynistic response to the “woman question” was offered by scholars such as Leon Battista Alberti in his treatise on the family, *Della Famiglia*, written in the 1430s. Alberti upholds a subordinate role for women in the hierarchy of the family unit. Other attacks against the pro-feminist campaign included slander of such historical female figures as Mary Tudor, Elizabeth I, and Marie de’ Medici, who often were a staple feature in literary satires (Gerrard 142-143).

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to survey a multitude of misogynistic and proto-feminist writings and iconography in the Renaissance, so I have listed only a few. However, it is crucial to realize that an ongoing debate existed over the idea of woman prior to, during, and after Milton’s sojourn in Italy. Milton was hardly forging a completely new path with a positive conception of Eve and woman; however, he did actively engage in the debate over the woman question, and it appears that he sided with the proto-feminists.

Keeping the forgoing literary and iconographic debate in mind, let us return to the Vatican and analyze positive depictions of the female. Milton, a defender of Eve and woman, was conscious of negative renderings of Eve and, thus, turned to positive portrayals of women as inspiration for his Eve in *Paradise Lost*. As mentioned earlier, Michelangelo’s treatment of Eve in the Sistine Chapel is quite pejorative, and thus not a good example of the heroic female which Milton wanted to characterize. Michelangelo’s Sibyls, however, constitute remarkably bold perspectives on the female form. The sibyls are essentially

heroic due to their role as counterpart to the Prophets. According to George Ferguson, “as the Prophets connect the Jewish world with Christianity, so the Sibyls connect the Greek and Roman world with the Christian era” (100-101). In Michelangelo’s fresco cycle, his five sibyls are powerful not only because they are depicted as prophets of God, but also for their massive form and beauty. The *Cumaeen Sibyl*, *Erythraean Sibyl* (Fig. 11), and *Libyan Sibyl* (Fig. 12) display arms and backs of great masculine strength, yet they are dressed in beautiful gowns of pink, yellow, and blue and sit in distinctly feminine postures with legs crossed or tightly held together. These women appear to be Michelangelo’s humanistic idealization of the female form. Their grandeur and poise illuminate them as stalwart women. Indeed, these prophets appear as worthy help to Adam in tending his garden. Michelangelo paints his female forms with such robust physicality as to suggest that woman was created for more than mere domestic chores. Likewise, Michelangelo’s *Judith* (Fig. 13) (with her maidservant) in a spandrel of the chapel carries the head of Holofernes back to her city. She is a servant of God and her people, a “woman worthie” depicted in the ceiling cycle.

Milton’s visit to the Vatican and exposure to Raphael’s Adam and Eve in the Stanza della Segnatura would have also revealed Raphael’s fresco *Mount Parnassus* (Fig. 14) in the same room. In this painting one notices men and women mingling together, reveling in the wonders of music and verse. Raphael’s imagination of life as an intellectual elite in pastoral Greece is lush and colorful. In this fresco, directly below the depiction of Eve as temptress, is one of



Figure 11 – *The Erythraean Sibyl* by Michelangelo



Figure 12 – *The Libyan Sibyl* by Michelangelo



Figure 1 – *The Temptation of St. Anthony* by Lucas van Leyden

religious debate over women in the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries caused woman's status to decline and misogynistic ideas to intensify (520).

Grössinger reinforces Farmer's deduction:

it can be seen that in this period the Virgin Mary became more and more revered and idealized, while woman remained forever Eve, thus widening the gulf between good and bad. The two polarities, of Mary the Virgin and Eve, of good and evil, came to dominate medieval life and thought in images of Life and Death, of Virtues and Vices, of Body and Soul, of the Fountain of Life and the Fountain of Love, and of the good and bad women from the Old and New Testaments. (5-6)

By the end of the tenth century, the polarization of the female as Mary and Eve reached its apex in the development of the cult of the Virgin by the order of Cluny (Kraus 84). The growth of Mariological iconography strategically contrasted with already existing portrayals of the seductress Eve. Interestingly, Mary was elevated to a stature unattainable by the common woman. According to Henry Kraus, it was in representations of Mary, "in the glorification of the Virgin ... the Woman-Without-Sin, the non-woman Woman, the anti-Eve" that monks were encouraged to focus their love and devotion (84). The confrontation between the two female personae was reinforced by the inversion of the letters "Eva" and "Ave." This word play is evident in a Latin poem by Peter Damian, an eleventh-century reformer:



Figure 13 – *Judith and Holofernes* by Michelangelo



the most revered female poets of antiquity, Sappho. Her head is turned towards other male poets, while her right hand clutches a musical instrument. Her left hand daintily holds a piece of paper inscribed with her own name. Perhaps this female lyricist furnished inspiration for Milton's Eve to be talented in poetic verse.

Throughout the vast halls of the Vatican are humanistic treatments of the female form inspired by antiquity. For example, Giovanni Battista Lombardelli's *Faith* in the Sala Vecchia degli Svizzeri (Fig. 15) is one of countless instances of the female rendered in the humanistic style. This particular female form symbolizes faith, holding the keys of St. Peter in one hand, while a dog, a Christian symbol of faithfulness, gazes up at her. The other seven virtues include Hope, Charity, Temperance, Prudence, Fortitude, and Justice, and are usually always portrayed as female. The womanly form is also employed in Renaissance art as emblematic of other forms of virtue, for example, *The Cardinal Virtues* (Fig. 16) and *The Theological Virtues* (Fig. 17) by Cherubino Alberti and Baldassare Croce in Sala Clementina.

Outside of the Vatican, positive treatments of Old Testament women were popular subjects for artistic commissions, and, consequently, flourished in private galleries. Because the theme of Judith and Holofernes is prevalent in Renaissance and baroque art, I will reference her as an especially apt example of the heroic female influential upon Milton's Eve.



Figure 15 – *Faith* by Giovanni Battista Lombardelli



Figure 16 – *The Cardinal Virtues* by Cherubino Alberti and Baldassare Croce (detail)



Figure 17 – *The Theological Virtues* by Cherubino Alberti and Baldassare Croce (detail)

Botticelli's *The Return of Judith to Bethulia* (Fig. 18) and *The Discovery of the Body of Holofernes* (c.1470) (Fig. 19) function, when viewed together, as a linear narrative. Judith is shown as piously returning to her city, sword in hand, while her maidservant carries Holofernes' head resting on top of her own. *The Return* illustrates the discovery of the body and the absolute shock of the soldiers at camp. John Ruskin's text, *Mornings in Florence*, written during a trip to Italy in 1874, comments on the Botticelli Judith, stating that she embodies the "mightiest, purest, brightest type of high passion in severe womanhood offered to our human memory" (qtd. in Ciletti 39). This "epic narrative" depiction of Judith in the Renaissance is rare; more often Judith is painted in the art of decapitation or placing the head into the bag (Gerrard 282). "In certain High Renaissance paintings," Gerrard contends, "the character of Judith stands outside time. She comes to represent the distilled essence of the story's potential broader application: the heroine as an emblem of Virtue itself" (286). This is evident, according to Gerrard, in Giorgione's *Judith* (1500-1504) (Fig. 20), where the heroine stands with her foot firmly fixed on top of Holofernes' head piously gazing down at her conquest (286). Interestingly, "many late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century images sustain the psychomachia concept of Judith as an *exemplum* of Virtue," Gerrard asserts (286). During the Reformation and Counter-Reformation depictions of Judith were manipulated by both Protestants and Catholics as a symbol of the supremacy of their own denomination (Gerrard 289).



Figure 18 – *The Return of Judith to Bethulia* by Botticelli

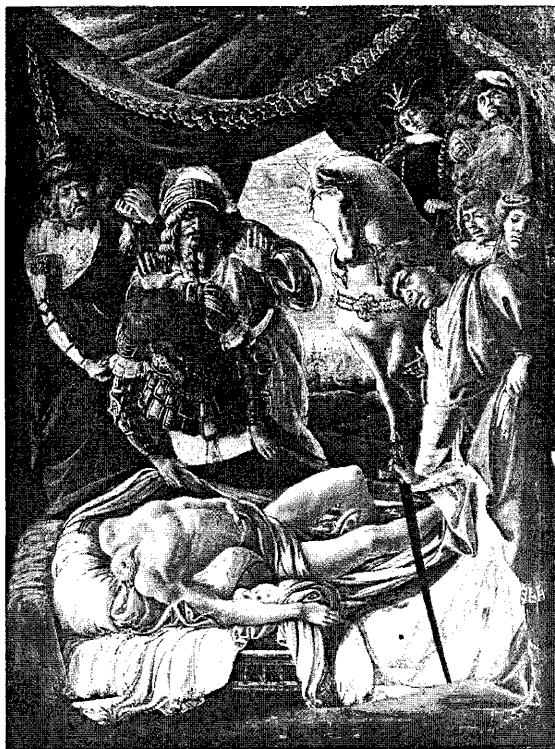


Figure 19 – *The Discovery of the Body of Holofernes* by Botticelli



Figure 20 – *Judith* by Giorgione

Perhaps the most shocking and vivid depictions of Judith are those by Caravaggio and his followers. Caravaggio's *Judith Beheading Holofernes* (1598-1599) in the Palazzo Barberini (Fig. 21) mixes naturalism and chiaroscuro, creating a hypnotic effect. His Judith appears innocent and confused, almost incapable of the act of decapitation. The pronounced contrast in ages between Judith, Holofernes, and Abra (the maidservant) is in accordance with the sixteenth-century idea of *contrapposto*, Gerrard suggests (291).

Artemisia Gentileschi's painting *Judith Slaying Holofernes* (c. 1620), now in the Uffizi Gallery's permanent collection (Fig. 22), appears at first glance violent and sinister, with a Caravaggesque influence one would not think tempted a female's paintbrush in the seventeenth century. Indeed, Gentileschi herself was working against entrenched literary and iconographic traditions of woman as Eve who succumbs to temptation and eats the fruit of knowledge, bringing woe to mankind.

Gentileschi's *Judith Slaying Holofernes* (1612-1513) and perhaps the one commissioned for Cosimo II, *Judith Slaying Holofernes* (1620), are two almost identical depictions of the scene inspired by Caravaggio. Interestingly, Gentileschi's maidservant appears the same age as her Judith. Also, her Judith is pictured as imminently capable of the task God has set before her: her sleeves are rolled up, and determined arched eyebrows and tight lips characterize the subject. Gentileschi, whom art historian Nancy G. Heller calls the "quintessential female painter of the Baroque era," gained critical stature by aggressively



Figure 21 – *Judith Beheading Holofernes* by Caravaggio



Figure 22 – *Judith Slaying Holofernes* by Artemisia Gentileschi

opposing the iconographic tradition of women portrayed as beautiful, edenic, yet suspiciously seductive creatures. Correspondence between Artemisia and Cassiano dal Pozzo reflects his continual commission of her work. In a letter to Cassiano in 1630, Artemisia mentions a self-portrait commissioned by the patron. And in a 1635 letter to Cassiano she also mentions works prepared for Cardinal Francesco Barberini (378-379). A letter to Galileo Galilei suggests a close friendship between scientist and artist. In this letter, she mentions the Judith she painted for Cosimo II, thanking Galileo for acquiring the commission for her (Gerrard 383). These connections place Artemisia Gentileschi in the same circles as Milton. Although Artemisia was in England assisting her father with fresco work for the English royal court during Milton's visit, he mingled with her friends and patrons who decorated their palaces with her depictions of heroic females.

Milton's awareness of the female painter, who was famous in her own lifetime, appears quite likely. But was Milton knowledgeable of the story of Judith, and was he exposed to positive depictions of the female hero? Although Milton does not mention Judith in any of his works, the theme of Judith is woven throughout the poetry Milton read and revered. A glimpse of two literary works, one English, the other Italian will reveal Milton's familiarity with the tradition of the heroic female in art.

Chaucer's saucy wife of Bath in *The Canterbury Tales* certainly is not heroic in the conventional sense of the term; however, she is a vociferous character who

speaks out against oppression. Chaucer casts such women as Lucretia and Cleopatra as heroic, righteous woman in his *Legend of Good Women* (Gerrard 214). The theme of Judith is not ignored by Chaucer; in fact, her story appears in both positive and negative contexts in *The Canterbury Tales*. In “The Monk’s Tale” Chaucer mentions Holofernes among the many men of history who paid a price for self-aggrandizement. The monk states,

But taak kep of the deth of Oloferne:
 Amydde his hoost he dronke lay a-nyght,
 Withinne his tente, large as is a berne,
 And yet, for al his pompe and al his myght,
 Judith, a womman, as he lay upright
 Slepynge, his heed of smoot, and from his tente
 Ful pryvely she stal from every wight,
 And with his heed unto hir toun she wente. (ll. 2567-3764)

This description of Judith as a woman who summoned the courage to confront Holofernes depicts her as powerful and valiant. She is a representative of Bethulia who will defend her city against the mighty vain tyrant. In “The Merchant’s Tale” the figures of the “women worthies” are treated in a more confusing light. The misogynist merchant mentions Judith, Abigail, and Esther as ideal types of women, while in the same breath he consigns woman in general to the roles of servant, nurse, and maid. He praises the Old Testament women stating,

Lo Judith, as the storie eek telle kan,
 By wys conseil she Goddes peple kepte,
 And slow hym Olofernus, whil he slepte.

Lo Abigayl, by good conseil how she
 Saved his housbonde Nabal whan that he
 Sholde han be slayn; and looke, Ester also
 By good conseil delivered out of wo
 The peple of God, and made hym Mardochee
 Of Assuere enhaunced for to be. (ll. 1366-1374)

Following this extensive adulation of these women, the merchant chides,

Wel may the sike man biwaille and wepe,
 Ther as ther nys no wyf the hous to kepe. (ll. 1381-1382)

This statement suggests that the heroic women of the Old Testament may have been intrepid, but they were still mere women, consigned to their ascribed roles as domestic care-giver and servant to man. At any rate, the debate over conceptions of the female were existent in Chaucer's time. Seeking to portray the female in a positive light, Milton would have been aware of this tradition in his own country, as he contemplated the heroic female he would shape as postlapsarian Eve.

Outside of England, the Italian poet Francesco Petrarca was imitated and revered by English poets such as Shakespeare and Donne. He was well read among men of letters, including Milton. Petrarch's *Trionfi* was quite popular

during the Renaissance. In fact, D. D. Carnicelli asserts that this poem “outshone both Petrarch’s sonnets and Dante’s *Divine Comedy* for a hundred years or more” (vii). The poem is divided into six sections: Love, Chastity, Death, Fame, Time, and Divinity. Judith appears in three of the six (Love, Chastity, and Fame). The *Trionfi* is replete with positive descriptions of the heroic female as Judith. In *The Triumph of Love*, III Petrarch states,

Judeth that hent hym by the heares
The proude Holiferne vanquished by love,
Whereby she savyde her citee from reprove. (III: 84-86)

This description of Judith, unlike Chaucer’s, purposely mentions her city to remind the reader that Judith was an emissary sent by God to save her people. In *The Triumph of Chastity*, Petrarch continues his praise, describing her as, “Judith the Ebrewew, the wyse and the stronge” (line 15). Here, we see Judith marked by characteristics of intelligence and physical continence. Finally, in *The Triumph of Fame*, II Judith is commended for her chastity in contrast to Holofernes’ drunken slothfulness. Petrarch states,

Yet the Chast Judeth wyll I call to mynde,
That slewe dronken Holyferne in love blynde
And dronken as he lay routing in his bedde.
Wyth hys owne sworde she smote of his hedde. (II: 157-160)

Milton was quite aware of Petrarch’s *Trionfi* and probably knew it well. In a letter from Carlo Dati to Milton dated 1 November, 1647 Dati shared particular

observations from *The Triumph of Love III* (CM, XII, 299). His casual reference to this poem suggests intimate familiarity with the subject on the part of both men. Thus, Milton was cognizant of Petrarch's heroic female character who may have provided inspiration in poetic verse for the English poet's courageous woman.

Many representations of other stalwart women exist in the literary and iconographic history of Italy. Petrarch mentions the pagan women Lucretia and Cleopatra (Fig. 23) as heroic female figures in the *Trionfi*. Iconographic depictions of these women are prevalent in the works of Gentileschi and the followers of Caravaggio, which were finished before Milton's journey. Likewise, Caravaggesque depictions of Christian saints such as St. Catherine of Alexandria (Fig. 24), St. Cecilia (Fig. 25), and St. Mary Magdalene (Fig. 26) all constitute positive portrayals of the female as beatific. Indeed, many versions adorned the halls of the Barberini Palace and the palaces of other elite patrons. Milton's connection with Michelangelo the Younger through the Accademia Crusca exposed him to Artemisia's *Allegory of Inclination* (1615-1616) in Casa Buonarroti (Fig. 27). The room where this fresco appears is devoted to Michelangelo and the arts. Artemisia's female figure does not appear as heroic as her Judith; however, this introduction would have provided Milton with at least a cursory knowledge of her work and an eye for it while in Rome. Artemisia's *Self-Portrait as the Allegory of Painting* (1630) (Fig. 28) conveys a positive image of a female in the act of painting. Because this naturalistic style of painting utilized scenes from the material world as inspiration, the female form is not idealized or negated but

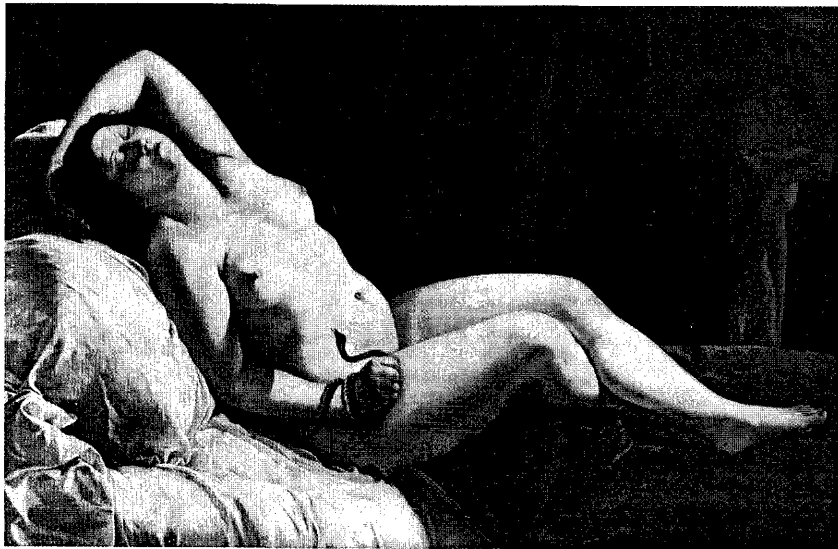


Figure 23 – *Cleopatra* by Artemisia Gentileschi



Figure 24 – *St. Catherine of Alexandria* by Caravaggio



Figure 25 – *St. Cecilia* by Artemisia Gentileschi



Figure 26 – *The Penitent Magdalen* by Artemisia Gentileschi



Figure 27 – *Allegory of Inclination* by Artemisia Gentileschi



Figure 28 – *Self-Portrait as the Allegory of Painting* by Artemisia Gentileschi

depicted realistically. This is especially true in Artemisia's eyes; her women are valiant and strong.

Mentioned earlier in this essay, the baroque ceiling fresco was quite popular during and after Urban VIII's pontificate. Andrea Sacchi's *Divine Wisdom* (Fig. 29), in one of the reception rooms of the Barberini Palace, was most likely seen by Milton during his many visits there. Also, because the primary reception room was under construction, the second room would have been the salon where Francesco received his guests. The images of the women in this fresco are similar to those in Raphael's *Mount Parnasus* as female figures from antiquity. These women are draped in colorful robes displaying images which explain the virtues they symbolize. The woman holding the crown represents nobility, the woman representative of strength holds the club of Hercules, Suavity holds the lyra, Eternity, the serpens/ophiuchus; Benefice, the spica/virgo; Divinity, the triangulum; Divine Wisdom, the sun, etc. These women, similar to the Virtues in the Vatican, represent positive characteristics of Barberini power and nobility. The female form is utilized to depict Barberini nepotism and strength, an enlightened view of the female, in my opinion. Milton's trips to the palace would have exposed him to powerful depictions of the female he could envision while rewriting Eve's persona.

Even if Milton had no access to people's palaces to view art, the archetype of the heroic female existed in statuary—a mode of art on display to the entire Italian public. Specific female statuary in the streets of Florence comes to mind,



Figure 29 – *Divine Wisdom* by Andrea Sacchi

since Milton spent a majority of his tour there. For example, Ghiberti's *Judith* (1430-1440) (Fig. 30) can be found ensconced on the side of the Duomo's Bapistry raising her sword in defeat of Holofernes, while thanking God for her city's triumph. Ciletti describes this Judith as "a more fluid conception of heroism" than Donatello's *Judith and Holofernes* (1455-1460) (Fig. 31) in the Piazza Signoria. Donatello's statue embodied different meanings for Florentines, including Medici strength to the power of ruling priors of the Republican government (Johnson 228). For Milton, this statue in the Piazza Signoria was an evocation of the powerful, heroic female he studied in Petrarch's work. Other representations of the female, such as the *Salome at the Execution of the Baptist* (1571) found above one of the doors of the bapistry, as well as numerous Madonna representations along the facade of the church, were public depictions of the female form. According to Geraldine A. Johnson, there was an ongoing political debate among Florentines which is reflected in their statuary in public spaces (236-244). She successfully argues that the Piazza Signoria became the stage for arguments over gender power through the masculinization of the piazza. With her conjecture in mind, a social climate of opinion existed and was represented through statuary concerning the debate over female equality. Milton certainly visited this piazza in the heart of Florence at the site of civic government, because of its proximity to the Arno and the Ponte Vecchio, two locations he frequently comments on in his letters.



Figure 30 – *Judith* by Ghiberti



Figure 31 – *Judith and Holofernes* by Donatello

The *querelle des femmes*, initiated in the fifteenth century, extended with "heated...vigor" into the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries throughout England and the continent of western Europe. Both feminist and anti-feminist art and literature competed for a forum. Milton was, indeed, immersed in this climate of opinion and was an active participant in the ongoing debate over female equality. The most vivid examples of Milton's exposure to depictions of heroic female figures, and his desire to shape Eve into such an image, are woven into the text of *Paradise Lost*. A closer examination of the poem will illuminate Milton's role in the debate over woman and the influence of positive portrayals of the female while abroad.

Chapter V

In the forgoing section of this study, I established the traditional historical and iconographic conceptions of the heroic female, as well as laid the foundation for Milton's probable exposure to such iconography during his continental tour. Presuming that Milton was aware of the tainted image of Eve, "how was [he] to cope with the eternal feminine in the shape of a notoriously obstreperous Eve?" McColley questions. My reply is that Milton, in fact, used the heroic female illustrated in early feminist literary and iconographic debate as a blueprint for his New Eve. His exposure to the proto-feminist "climate of opinion" trickles into the language of his poetry. Therefore, it is essential to analyze portions of *Paradise Lost* to observe how Milton not only overcomes previous conceptions of Eve but also models her after already existing images of ideal women.

In the epic, once Satan finds his way to Adam and Eve by swimming through Chaos, he rests on the Tree of Life, "devising Death / To them who liv'd" (IV, ll. 197-198). Satan's first glance at Adam and Eve supplies interesting insight into both the couples' relationship and Eve's individual personality. The omniscient narrator relates Satan's perceptions:

where the Fiend
Saw undelighted all delight, all kind
Of living Creatures new to sight and strange:
Two of far nobler shape erect and tall,

Godlike erect, with native Honour clad
 In naked Majestie seemd Lords of all,
 And worthie seemd, for in thir looks Divine
 The image of thir glorious Maker shon,
 Truth, Wisdom, Sanctitude severe and pure. (IV, ll. 285-293)

In this passage Eve is pictured neither as the coy maiden, nor the diabolical temptress who brings woe to mankind. Instead, the narrator describes her in identical terms as Adam. Both man and woman are “Godlike erect, with native Honour clad / In naked Majestie seemd Lords of all.” Eve, here, merits the status as Lord “of all” just as Adam. The narrator describes both figures’ faces as, “The image of thir glorious Maker shon.” Not only is Adam fashioned in the image of God, so is Eve. How can a woman created in the pure image of God be perceived as evil incarnate? Milton’s first description of Adam and Eve through Satan’s perspective allows the reader to see Eve’s “Truth, Wisdom, [and] Sanctitude.” Just as the female form in the frescos of the Vatican (such as Lombardelli’s *Faith* or Sacchi’s *Divine Wisdom* in the Barberini Palace) are representative of the virtues, here the appositional nouns used to depict Eve are-- “Truth, Wisdom, Sanctitude.” Admittedly, Milton does comment that the two individuals are not equal, but the issue of equality is irrelevant to this argument. What is germane is that Milton is able to envision Eve outside of her reductive iconographic and literary role as simply the seductress of mankind. He casts her into a different category with female figures who embody characteristics

mankind aspires to attain. Eve not only embodies cardinal virtues, she is a dynamic individual, not the static female character of Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel. Aside from Eve's physically Edenic description, she "Yield[s] with coy submission, modest pride, / And sweet reluctant amorous delay" (IV, ll. 310-311). This description contrasts dramatically with Hans Baldung Grien's *Eve, the Serpent, and Death*, where Eve appears overcome with pride, aggression, and evil. Milton's description of Eve's hair as "unadorned golden tresses wore / Disshevel'd, but in wanton ringlets way'd" suggests that there is something wild about Eve's appearance or nature that needs to be disciplined or tamed. But this does not mean she symbolizes evil, rather Milton simply is describing her prelapsarian sexual allure. Because the Early Church Fathers equated beauty with sin, Eve's sexuality is generally seen as essentially wicked. McColley asserts,

By linking beauty and sexuality directly to an immediate Fall, these works [such as Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel] suggest to the unreflecting viewer either that beauty and passion are inherently corrupting, and therefore to be avoided, or else that the Fall produced erotic love and was therefore to be desired. These implications are among the misapprehensions Milton addresses in *Paradise Lost* by linking divinely created beauty and a chaste and ardent sexuality directly to "native innocence." (*Milton's Eve* 7)

Therefore, Milton's Eve is seen as embodying innocent sexuality mixed with, "Truth, Wisdom, [and] Sanctitude." Truly, prelapsarian Eve is a dynamic character because she personifies virtues of the ideal woman for Milton.

Not only is Eve mentally and physically an ideal match for man, she helps to shoulder the burden of labor as well. Concerned over the progress of their toil, Eve addresses Adam, "well may we labour still to dress / This Garden, still to tend Plant, Herb and Flow'r, / Our pleasant task enjoyn'd" (IX, ll.205-207). Milton's Eve does not sit passively by watching Adam toil in the fields, nor does she abide patiently at home preoccupied with domestic chores. Milton's Eve shares equally in the task of tending the garden. Not only that, she is an active participant in discussing their methods of labor and thinking of more effective ways to "lop overgrown, or prune, or prop, or bind" the "wanton growth" of the garden until they have children to aid them in their efforts. "Let us divide our labors," she suggests, in hopes of creating a more efficient, equitable working environment. The very fact that Eve makes such a proposal implies that Adam and Eve work as comrades. She does not simply comply with his orders, rather they share responsibilities equally. Barbara Lewalski argues that "Eve, far from being confined to her bower and her domestic concerns while Adam forges forth in the outside world, is imagined to share fully with her mate in the necessary work of that world" (7-8). Michelangelo's or Raphael's Eve may physically appear capable of aiding Adam in tending Eden, but both portrayals depict a serpent, or Satan, suggesting that Eve is Adam's antagonist rather than his

comrade. Certainly, Michelangelo's sibyls appear to be capable women, stout and self-sufficient, a worthy blueprint for a female partner in tending the garden of Eden.

While Adam is allotted the responsibility of naming the animals in Eden, Eve, too, is assigned responsibility by God in the sense that she participates in the process of naming the plants. Postlapsarian Eve laments that she will not be able to tend her beautiful flowers which are incapable of growing outside the climate of Eden. "At Eev'n, which I bred up with tender hand / From the first op'ning bud, and gave ye Names / Who now shall rear ye to the Sun, or rank / Your Tribes" (XI, ll. 276-279). It is Eve who gives the flowers names, promotes their growth, and separates them into different orders. Lewalski argues that Eve's ability to name the plants, "show[s] her comprehension of their natures, her rightful dominion over them, and her command of the human power of symbolization" (8). This responsibility meted to Eve by God establishes a relationship between the diety and woman. It also substantiates the female as an autonomous entity, capable of shaping and creating the world in her own mode. Eve accomplishes a worthy deed for God by carrying out his demands. Such is the case with other Old Testament women or female saints who strove to fulfill God's demands upon them. Eve's shared participation in the activity of naming demonstrates her intelligence and comprehension of the world around her.

This portrayal of Eve as a bright, stalwart woman is quite apparent in the epic poem. Milton obviously models his Eve after worthy women who

exemplify the characteristics that God would have believably bestowed upon Adam to be his “meet help.” John Leonard declares,

the surprising fact is that Eve should give names at all. In the seventeenth century, this was an extraordinary endorsement of her fundamental worth. Milton’s Eve possesses both understanding and responsibility. She also has remarkable knowledge. (47)

According to Leonard, to ascribe such a degree of responsibility to a women in the seventeenth century would be radical. Therefore, Milton is making a vigorous argument in favor of Eve and perhaps the entire gender as well-- that she is an intelligent creature endowed with traits that make her just as compelling and dynamic as Adam/man.

Eve shares labor with Adam, she shares the task of naming with Adam, but she also shares a poetic voice with him as well. Not only is she physically strong and intellectually astute, she possesses lyrical power as well. Eve’s command of the pastoral idyll is evident in Book IV, ll. 650-656 when she addresses Adam:

But neither breath of Morn when she ascends
With Charm of earliest Birds, nor rising Sun
On this delightful land, nor herb, fruit, flower,
Glistring with dew, nor fragrance after showers,
Nor grateful Evning mild, nor silent Night
With this her solemn Bird, nor walk by Moon,

Or glittering Starr-light without thee is sweet.

Eve's ability to compose and recite a pastoral poem for Adam further establishes her nobility. Moreover, her command of language is apparent throughout the poem, not solely in this passage. Eve appears as Raphael's Sappho in his fresco *Mount Parnassus*, rivaling the lyricist with the title of first female poet. McColley maintains, "If we regard the Fall as the central act of the poem and conviction of sin in the reader as its primary purpose, we will of course see and stress the dark and sinister side of each image and allusion" (*Milton's Eve* 13). But throughout *Paradise Lost*, Milton emphasizes prelapsarian Eve's dynamism, her mental and physical attributes previously ignored in intellectual and religious circles. Milton implicitly argues that Eve is an unrecognized "woman worthie," that she upholds and surpasses the characteristics of these positive women.

Not only is Eve's value evident before the fall, but she is equally potent afterwards. Fallen Eve gains attributes not evident in the prelapsarian female: she is valiant, selfless, and heroic. After the Fall, when Adam and Eve reveal their crime to the Son/God, Adam quickly lies to Jesus/God placing sole blame upon her when he was completely aware of his own guilt (X, ll. 137-143). Eve, on the other hand, freely admits her guilt, an act bespeaking substantial valor. She cries, "The Serpent me beguil'd and I did eat" (X, l.162). Eve claims responsibility for her sinful action, but she also "brings [Adam] from the utter hopelessness and immobility of despair to some capacity for thought and action"

(Lewalski 18). She bemoans to Adam, "mee then thy self / More miserable; both have sin'd, but thou / Against God onely, I against God and thee" (X, ll.929-931). Eve has not only disobeyed God, but she has sinned against her companion and, consequently, begs for his forgiveness: "Forsake me not thus, *Adam*, witness Heav'n / What love sincere, and revrence in my heart I bear thee" (X, ll.914-916). In an attempt to prove her love and devotion to Adam and acknowledge culpability for the Fall, Eve compels God to fix complete reproach upon her, a position which Christ ultimately assumes to redeem mankind. Eve laments, "on me, soul cause to thee of all this woe, / Mee mee onely just object of his ire" (X, ll. 935-936). As one can see, postlapsarian Eve is neither weak nor sinister; she is a formidable, clear-sighted, and--yes--heroic woman. The characteristic of being Christ-like makes Eve's connection with Mary a more positive one. Interestingly, Milton's Eve takes on the identity of the Old Testament female whose heroism is Christ-like or with biblical female figures such as Mary and Mary Magdalene who relentlessly aspire to be Christ-like. Lewalski argues, "It is Eve's persistent admissions of guilt, pleas for forgiveness, and expressions of love that revive in Adam those feelings and emotions which bind him to his kind and make life seem again endurable" (19). It is Eve, as woman, who redeems mankind from "self-destructive anger and despair" (Lewalski 19). Adam responds to Eve's attempts to salvage their relationship stating, "let us no more contend, nor blame / Each other, blam'd enough elsewhere, but strive / In offices of Love, how we may light'n / Each others burden in our share of woe" (X, ll.958-961). At this

point, Adam and Eve share equally each other's guilt and despair. Adam regards Eve as his confidant and aide in confronting the harsh world outside of Eden—an ideal woman, a true “meet help.”

Many Milton scholars such as Sandra M. Gilbert contend that despite the attributes ascribed to Eve, a misogynistic undertone remains palpable in the language of his epic. In response to this claim, it is important to consider tradition, family structure, and Puritanism in seventeenth-century England. As mentioned earlier, John Leonard believes that Milton was quite bold to empower Eve with the ability to name the plants in a time period when women were denied the right to vote, maidens were considered the legal possession of their parents, and wives were considered the absolute property of their husbands. The English family unit was constructed in a patriarchal fashion in which the husband labored for family and home, while the wife tended the hearth and raised the children. The Puritan ethic teaches that Godly women submit to their husbands and tend to their home. Compared with the entrenched subjugation of women in English society during the seventeenth century, Milton's vision was radical indeed.

Perhaps the great poet aspired to create an ideal woman as man's companion for the seventeenth century in accordance with the “climate of opinion” of his times. Gladys J. Willis maintains,

Upon reading the divorce tracts, and then, *Paradise Lost*, one can easily make the connection between the archetypal ‘unfit’ wife

described in the divorce tracts and Eve, Milton's exemplum of this archetypal persona, the representative of all wives who fit into Milton's prescribed mold" for a companionate relationship between man and woman. (9)

The image of the "unfit wife" is prevalent in Medieval and Renaissance woodcuts and engravings and stem from portrayals of Eve the original "unfit wife" (Bange 9-36, Pigeaud 39-55). Milton's attempt to rewrite Eve may also be an attempt to rewrite the role of woman and rescue her from a reductive stereotype by associating her with positive female archetypes in literature and art. In *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* (1644) Milton states, "...God saw it was not good that man should be left alone..." but have "a fit soule to his in the cheerfull society of wedlock" (Flannagan 939). Marriage to Milton was one of "unfained love and peace" a "human society" that "proceeds from the mind rather than the body"(Flannagan 941,948). Where else could Milton find this image of a "fit [female] soule" if not in the examples of beautifully heroic women proposed by advocates of female autonomy?

Milton's Eve is, indeed, an artistic creation which constitutes a triumphant denial of centuries of primitive, superstitious misconceptions of woman. In fact she is just as worthy as Judith or Lucretia in his eyes. Galatea was Pygmalion's artistic beauty of ideal femininity. Similar to Milton, Pygmalion was a man who succeeded in fashioning the paragon of females out of his own artistry:

Pygmalion began to carve

in snow-white ivory, with wondrous art,
a female figure more exquisite than
a woman who was born could ever match.

That done, he falls in love with his own work. (Ovid, X, ll. 247-251)

Perhaps Milton, as well, fell in love with the woman he patiently molded
with elegant blank verse--his own Galatea.

CHAPTER VI

Just as climates of opinion within coteries and between countries build upon one another, so to do atmospheres of thought between centuries. John Milton, a product of "the century of genius," added to the foundation for female empowerment that began with the early works of Christine de Pizan. England was not devoid of the debate over the "woman question," as evidenced by such works as Joseph Swetman's *The arraignment of Lewd, Idle, Froward, and unconstant women*.(1615), a literary assault, on women who defy their proper role in society. In retaliation, various proto-feminist writers in England published retorts to Swetman's attacks including Rachel Speght, Ester Sowernam, and Constantia Munda in her essay, *The Worming of a mad Dogge*. Such contemporary works in England furthered the notion that skills and methods utilized by the sciences worked their way into the debate over female autonomy and individuality, and that Milton's Eve was the poet's contribution to the proto-feminist debate within his own country as well as abroad. In fact, Milton's position on the status of the female would further the debate well into the eighteenth century. As Stroberg asserts, "whenever anyone of stature thinks about a problem or issue, he tries to take into account what has gone before, to know 'the state of the question' and make his contribution against this background" (563). Thus, Milton's arguments remained a vital topic for reflection by many philosophes through the Age of Enlightenment.

The analytical perspective initiated by the Scientific Revolution served as the foundation of the Enlightenment and gave birth to such political theorists as John Locke and Montesquieu. Critical readings of both Locke's *Two Treatises of Government* and Montesquieu's *L'Esprit des Lois* reveal that these two scholars strived to understand the laws that drove the world of human society. They aspired to shape religion, government, law, morality, and economics in accordance with natural laws.

The writings of Montesquieu and Locke embody essential ideals prevalent throughout the Enlightenment. The Philosophes applied the theories of these great political and social theorists to social and economic thought, epistemology, psychology, education, slavery, and humanitarianism. The clearly articulated ideals of liberty and equality fostered the growth of a women's movement in Western Europe. Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* protests against the subordination of women and the limited opportunities allotted for female education during the eighteenth century. Reminiscent of Locke's remarks on tyranny, Wollstonecraft asserts that it is an act of tyranny for woman "to be excluded from a participation of the natural rights of mankind"(11-12).

Like Milton, Wollstonecraft articulated core principles of the modern outlook, albeit a century later. In this respect both artists joined the chain of revolutionary thinkers participating in a dialogue that now extends into the twenty-first century. This intellectual, historical criticism of "climate of opinion,"

along with placing John Milton in the historical context of the proto-feminist debate, illuminates *Paradise Lost*, not only as a monumental English epic, but as a literary conversation over the status of women that plays an active role in feminist theory today.

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VITA

Mattie Katherine Pennebaker

5808 Sheffield
Terrace Ln.
Bryan, Tx 77802
Phone: (409) 776-1954
E-mail:
mkp7611@unix.tamu.edu

Education	<p>June 1998 – Present Texas A&M University <i>College Station, TX</i> Bachelor of Arts (History and English)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ GPA: 4.0/4.0 ▪ Double major ▪ Graduating December 2000, Summa Cum Laude
Activities	<p>President of Phi Alpha Theta, 1999-Present University of Texas Equestrian Team, 1997</p>
Awards & Honors	<p>University Undergraduate Research Fellows, 1999-2000 National Society of Collegiate Scholars National Undergraduate Literature Conference Women's Club Scholarship, 1996 Henry Jameson Competition, first runner up, 1999 Phi Kappa Phi, 1999 Phi Alpha Theta, Int'l Honors Society in History, 1998-2000 Dean's List, 1998 English Department Essay Competition, 2000 Howard Houghs Scholarship, 1999</p>
Languages	<p>Fluent/Conversational in French and Beginning Conversational in Italian</p>